



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Lackland AFB provides a time and place for basic trainees to worship

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Kristina Lindberg
Special to the Express-News

Hundreds of basic military trainees stand in the pews of the Gateway Chapel at Lackland AFB, holding hands, praying and singing at 8 on a recent Sunday morning.

At the end of the rows rests a box of tissues, ready to offer comfort to the men and women in camouflage and dress blues who have started to cry during the contemporary Protestant worship.

This hour of worship is usually the only time trainees have to themselves during their basic training, and many of them show their emotions during the service.

Chaplain Capt. Gabriel Rios' message about God's love, however, soon replaces tears with claps and cheers. His voice grows louder as he implores a trainee in the front row to stand up. Then he wraps his arms around the young man's shoulders.

"Those tears are precious in God's sight," Rios tells the trainees. "They show that you want to go back to him."

This is one of 25 services eight chaplains, staff and volunteers conduct each week for basic trainees whether they are Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, Greek Orthodox, Buddhist, Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Christ, Christian Science, Latter Day Saints, Pentecostal, Baha'i or of another faith.

Generally, the student load of all basic military training is between 4,000 and 4,500 per week.

Each week 2,500 to 3,000 trainees attend religious education, which includes Bible studies and discussion groups.

Trainees have the opportunity to attend one service and one religious education class per week.

In addition to organizing the logistics — about 1,000 new trainees come to Lackland every week to accomplish their six-week training — the chaplains also give 400 counseling sessions each month.

Rios, who has been with Lackland's Air Force basic military chapel for three years, loves his work although he spends 12 hours a day at it.

"If I had Bill Gates' money, I would let the Air Force let me do what I'm doing," he said. "I love my job that much."



John Davenport/Express-News
Trainees clap to the music while attending Catholic services at the Gateway Chapel at Lackland Air Force Base on Sunday Feb. 19.

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The religious affiliation of Air Force members is proportional to American society, chief Chaplain Maj. Douglas Hall said.

It is not the chaplains' goal to convert nonbelievers, but to let them freely exercise their right to not believe. All of the services, religious education and counseling are open to them.

Airman basic Paul Stephan of the 326th Training Squadron noticed some nonbelievers began attending church during basic training.

"They started out preferring being at church rather than with the training instructor," the 21-year old said.

His fellow airman basic Cody MacDonald serves as a chapel guide and attends four services a week.

He finds the service at Lackland similar to the Protestant church he attends back home in Paradise, Calif.

Another airman basic from that squadron, Chance Nursey-Bush, 18, who described himself as spiritual before he came to Lackland, likes the multimedia approach in some sermons; Rios had punctuated his sermon on God's love with clips from "Finding Nemo."

Aside from services, chaplains spend much of their time counseling stressed trainees who are away from home, many for the first time, and must endure round-the-clock discipline.

"What is behind that face is stress," Rios said. "This is the phrase I use often: 'Please relax.'"

Trainees can request to see a chaplain anytime during their stay and can rest assured their issues will be kept confidential.

"We make it clear to them we're not the people to process them out of the Air Force," Hall said.

Hall, a Catholic priest who celebrates Masses, said most trainees who request counseling suffer from stress and depression.

Senior Chaplain Maj. Christy Sorrow finds the clergy fills a niche for basic trainees.

"They have come to learn to understand that the chaplain is one of the few places where they can let their guard down," Sorrow said.

At the end of the hour allotted for the contemporary Protestant service, the seats empty quickly before another wave of trainees fills in for the following worship.



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Air Force Times



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6 Mar 06

Probe: Heart condition killed recruit

By [Rod Hafemeister](#)

Times staff writer

SAN ANTONIO — A basic-training recruit who died in October at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, suffered from a pre-existing heart condition, the Air Force said Friday.

Airman Basic Joshua M. Rolfe, 19, died Oct. 29, four days after entering basic military training. He collapsed during the second lap of a scheduled six-lap run designed to assess physical readiness.

An investigation determined that Rolfe died from a form of cardiac arrhythmia, officials with Air Education and Training Command said. It occurs when the right ventricle muscle is replaced by fat and fibrosis.

Rolfe, from Danville, Ohio, was assigned to Lackland's 322nd Training Squadron.

After he collapsed, two medical technicians at the track performed CPR and called for an ambulance, officials said. Rolfe was transported to Wilford Hall Medical Center, where he later died.

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6 Mar 06

E-8 promotion selection rate drops

By [Rod Hafemeister](#)

Times staff writer

SAN ANTONIO — The opportunity for making senior master sergeant has slipped back to its pre-9/11 level, with the selection rate dropping below 9 percent for the first time since 2001.

Air Force officials announced Friday that 1,303 master sergeants have been selected for senior master sergeant out of 15,104 considered this year — a selection rate of 8.63 percent.

Selection rates for 2002 through 2005 ranged from 10.18 to last year's 9.19 percent. Historically, selection rates since the late 1980s have averaged in the 7 to 8 percent range.

The public release of the list of those selected is scheduled for 8 a.m. Central Standard Time on March 8.

The senior master sergeant board convened at the Air Force Personnel Center from Jan. 30 through Feb. 17.

Promotions from the list will begin in April, officials said.

The average score for those selected was 661.37 with an average time in grade and time in service of 4.42 and 20.22 years respectively. The average score was based on the following point averages:

- 135 for enlisted performance reports;
- 32.87 for time in grade;
- 21.30 for time in service;
- 20.82 for decorations;
- 66.67 for Air Force supervisory examination;
- 384.72 for board score.

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